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Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Illinois

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*... A guide to finding help
for grandparent caregivers
coping with the unexpected
responsibility of raising
young children*

Grandparents

"Grace's" dreams of retirement were shattered when she took her three young grandchildren into her home. Now, at age 60, she is starting a family -- with the limited financial resources of a retired person.

"Dorothy" and "Jim" are faced with raising an active five-year-old, while they both suffer from arthritis. Dorothy is also worried because her grandson is showing signs of having problems in school.

In Illinois, an estimated 70,000 children are being raised in homes where a grandparent or other relative **is the sole caregiver**. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of such children increased nationwide by 40% from 1980 to 1990. **In 1994, the percentage increase was 37%.** Reasons for this increase might include death of the parent(s), HIV/AIDS or other tragic illness, drug and/or alcohol abuse, domestic violence, teenage pregnancy, lack of parental responsibility, and economic problems.

Raising Grandchild

Grandparent caregivers range in age from 40 to 80 or older. They are from all walks of life and all cultural and economic groups. Many of the grandparents are overwhelmed with the situations they face. Many are totally unprepared to deal with problems facing parents and children of the '90s.



Mid-life and older grandparent caregivers have many concerns related to the care and responsibility of raising young people. These concerns include: legal issues (custody, guardianship, foster care and adoption); resources for the developmental needs of a child (especially if the child has special needs); and financial assistance that can help them meet the expenses of adding a young person(s) to the household. Coping with these concerns can take a toll on the grandparents' health. Signs of depression and anxiety are common among grandparents raising grandchildren.

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Help is available for older people who find themselves raising young children.

If you are a grandparent raising a grandchild, it is important to remember you are not alone.

Government and private service agencies across the state can provide information and assistance to aid **grandparent caregivers** as they cope with their new responsibilities.

If you have information about **grandparents raising grandchildren** that you would like to share, have questions about the issue, or need further information, you may contact the Illinois Department on Aging's **Senior HelpLine** at **1-800-252-8966** (Voice and TTY), 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Consider your own needs as a caregiver. Watch for signs of depression or sadness, increased blood pressure and fatigue, and back pain — especially if you must lift a very young child.

This brochure was developed by the **Task Force on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Illinois**. It is printed and distributed in cooperation with the **Illinois Department on Aging**, a member agency of the Task Force. The Task Force works to promote the awareness of the needs of grandparent caregivers, and to provide information to grandparents raising grandchildren.

To learn more about the Task Force, contact:

**The Illinois
Department on Aging
Senior HelpLine:
1-800-252-8966**

(Voice and TTY)

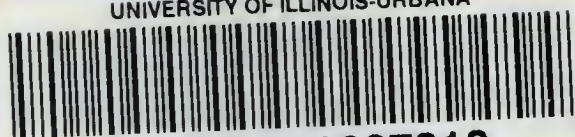
Monday through Friday, except
holidays, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 (voice and TTY).

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